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Newport, R.I.**

**VIETNAM'S FORAY INTO UN PEACEKEEPING:  
ADVANCING ITS INTERESTS WHILE KEEPING THE PEACE**

**by**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.**

**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**1 November 2013**

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## **Abstract**

Vietnam recently announced its intent to provide the United Nations (UN) with peacekeeping forces in calendar year 2014. Through their new participation in UN peacekeeping, Vietnam has an opportunity to expand their international and regional influence. This paper evaluates the ways peacekeeping can advance Vietnam's interests. It shows participation in UN activities will increase support for Vietnam's future bids to the UN Human Rights Council and Security Council. It will also serve as an avenue for Vietnam to improve their human rights record. On the regional level, peacekeeping operations provide an opportunity for improving relations and interoperability with fellow members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). If aggressive in developing their peacekeeping force, Vietnam will have the potential to fill a leadership role in ASEAN as that organization also takes on increased peacekeeping responsibilities. Furthermore, peacekeeping activities will improve Vietnam's interoperability with regional partners, indirectly helping hedge against Chinese claims in the South China Sea. All of this comes with the added benefit of increased expertise the Communist Party of Vietnam can use to deal with domestic issues. To maximize the benefits of participating in UN peacekeeping, the government of Vietnam should move forward quickly, but cautiously. This paper concludes by providing several recommendations for Vietnam as they enter the world of peacekeeping.

## INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, Cambodia had experienced nearly non-stop violence due to political instability.<sup>1</sup> The violent regime of Pol Pot, from 1975 to 1979, had devastated the country. In 1978, Vietnamese forces crossed the border into Cambodia to remove the regime of Pol Pot, but what Vietnam brought to Cambodia was not peace. During the Vietnamese occupation, savage political struggles between the Vietnamese supported Phnom Penh government, the Party of Democratic Kampuchea (the Khmer Rouge), and other groups continued. Under international pressure, the Vietnam government finally withdrew their overt support in 1989, but in its wake was a violent power struggle that would continue for another four years. The United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia (UNAMIC) and the follow-on UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) were UN peacekeeping missions created to help deal with the problems left behind by Vietnam. Although plagued by violence throughout the process, in November 1993 UNTAC was labeled a success and closed shop.<sup>2</sup>

No one would have assumed that less than 25 years after their brutal occupation, Vietnam would transform from being part of the problem to providing part of the solution. Remarkably, that is what has happened. In February, 2013, Lieutenant General Nguyen Chi Vinh, Deputy Minister of Defense for Vietnam, announced the intention of Vietnam to deploy forces in support of UN operations, similar to UNAMIC and UNTAC, during the 2014 calendar year.<sup>3</sup> The United States embraced this development. U.S. Secretary of State

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Cambodia - UNAMIC Background," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 25 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamicbackgr.html>.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Cambodia – UNTAC Background," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 25 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untacbackgr2.html>.

<sup>3</sup> *News Vietnam Net*, "Viet Nam's Peacekeepers 'at the ready'," 20 July 2013, accessed at <http://english.vietnamnet.vn/fms/government/67303/vietnam-to-participate-in-the-un-peacekeeping-force.html>.

John Kerry remarked at a lunch in Vietnam, "We welcome Vietnam's announcement that it intends to participate in UN peacekeeping operations in 2014."<sup>4</sup> Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang responded in his remarks, "Vietnam earnestly wants to be a responsible, reliable member of the international community with positive contribution to addressing international issues for the maintenance of peace, stability, and cooperation in Southeast Asia and Asia Pacific."<sup>5</sup> President Sang's remarks focused on the international benefit of UN peacekeeping, but certainly, Vietnam has much to gain as well. This paper argues that involvement in peacekeeping is a positive step for Vietnam in their attempts to advance their international and regional interests.

## **EVOLUTION OF PEACEKEEPING**

To understand Vietnam's interest in providing UN peacekeepers, it is necessary first to understand the evolution of peacekeeping. One of the primary purposes of the UN, as stated in the UN Charter, is "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace..."<sup>6</sup> Chapter VI of the UN Charter, Pacific Settlement of Disputes, has provisions for countries to bring disputes to the UN for consideration and the UN can make

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In addition to being a Deputy Minister of Defense, Lt Gen Vinh is head of the Vietnam Defense Ministry's Steering Committee for participation in UN peacekeeping missions.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Remarks at a Working Lunch with Vietnamese President Truong Tan Sang," 24 July 2013, accessed at <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2013/07/212378.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, "Chapter 1: Purposes and Principles," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>.

suggestions regarding how to settle the dispute.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, Chapter VI states the UN should take into account any agreements previously made in an attempt to settle the dispute; such as ceasefire arrangements or border control measures. Peacekeeping emerged from the UN's enforcement of Chapter VI activities. In 1948, the first UN peacekeepers deployed to monitor a ceasefire between Israel and its Arab neighbors.<sup>8</sup> This unarmed observer mission was typical of what would become known as "traditional peacekeeping." A key component of traditional peacekeeping conducted under Chapter VI is the consent of the involved parties.

From 1948 to 1988, the UN initiated thirteen peacekeeping operations.<sup>9</sup> All but one of these can be categorized as traditional peacekeeping conducted under Chapter VI. The lone exception was the United Nations Operation in the Congo (UNOC) from 1960-1964.<sup>10</sup> The UNOC was conducted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. The significant difference between Chapter VI and Chapter VII is the requirement, or lack thereof, for consent of the involved parties.<sup>11</sup> Chapter VII; Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression; says "the Security Council may call upon the parties concerned to comply with provisional measures...[and] shall duly take account of failure to

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<sup>7</sup> United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, "Chapter VI: Pacific Settlement of Disputes," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>.

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "UNTOSO – United Nations Truce Supervision Organization," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 8 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/untso/background.shtml>.

<sup>9</sup> UN peacekeeping missions are normally initiated by the UN Security Council. However, at times, especially when cold war politics nearly crippled the Security Council in terms of reaching consensus, the UN General Assembly has authorized peacekeeping missions. One example was the establishment of the United Nations Security Force (UNSF) in West New Guinea in 1962. See United Nations Peacekeeping, "West New Guinea – UNSF," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 31 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unsfbackgr.html>.

<sup>10</sup> United Nations Security Council (SC), Resolution 169, 24 November 1961, accessed at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/169\(1961\)](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/169(1961)).

<sup>11</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Principles of UN peacekeeping," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 23 September 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/principles.shtml>.



comply with such provisional measures."<sup>12</sup> Then Article 42, specifically states "...[the UN Security Council] may take such action by air, sea or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security."<sup>13</sup> This means under Chapter VII, the UN Security Council (UNSC) may make an independent determination of what constitutes a threat to the peace and act upon that threat without the specific consent of the belligerents. This occurred in the Congo as the UNSC authorized "vigorous action"<sup>14</sup> to include the required amount of force to prevent the start of a civil war. Chapter VII peacekeeping activities are collectively labeled peace enforcement operations.

A third peacekeeping label, peacebuilding, came into use after 1992. Then UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali used the word to signify setting the conditions from which a lasting peace can be maintained.<sup>15</sup> The 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, also known as the Brahimi Report, further described the term peacebuilding as "activities taken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war."<sup>16</sup> The Brahimi Report emphasized the importance of rule of law and human rights experts in complex peace operations.<sup>17</sup> The UN's New Partnership Agenda, published in 2009 and commonly called the New Horizons initiative, further defined

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations, *Charter of the United Nations*, "Chapter VII: Action with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the Peace, and Acts of Aggression," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed at <http://www.un.org/en/documents/charter/index.shtml>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> SC, Resolution 169.

<sup>15</sup> Boutros Boutros Ghali, "An Agenda for Peace: Preventive Diplomacy, peacemaking and peace-keeping; Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992," accessed at [http://www.unrol.org/files/A\\_47\\_277.pdf](http://www.unrol.org/files/A_47_277.pdf), 5.

<sup>16</sup> United Nations General Assembly Security Council, *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, 21 August 2000, accessed at [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/55/305), 3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 54-58.

the skills needed to meet evolving peacekeeping requirements.<sup>18</sup> This document outlined the requirement for rapid deployment, protection of civilians, supporting basic safety and security, supporting political processes, providing essential services, restoring core government functions, and revitalizing the economy. The capabilities required to achieve these priorities are considerably different when compared to the capabilities necessary to conduct traditional peacekeeping or peace enforcement. As peacekeeping efforts continue to move forward, all manner of peacekeeping will include characteristics of peacebuilding. For ease of readability, the remainder of this paper will use the generic term peacekeeping to account for the spectrum of peacekeeping activities. In areas where it is applicable, the specific terms traditional peacekeeping, peace enforcing, or peacebuilding will be used.

In addition to a change in the kind of capabilities demanded, the UN also has experienced an increase in the sheer number of people needed for peacekeeping operations. As previously noted, the UN fielded thirteen peacekeeping operations from 1948 to 1988. Then, from 1988 to 1994, the UN fielded an additional twenty new peacekeeping operations.<sup>19</sup> During the same time, the number of peacekeepers rose from 11,000 to 75,000. After the end of the cold war, there was an initial decrease in the number of UN peacekeepers deployed. However, since 2000 and the UN's reform of peacekeeping, there has been a near steady increase in the number of deployed forces. As the number of forces increased, the number of contributing countries also increased from 67 participating countries in 1992 to

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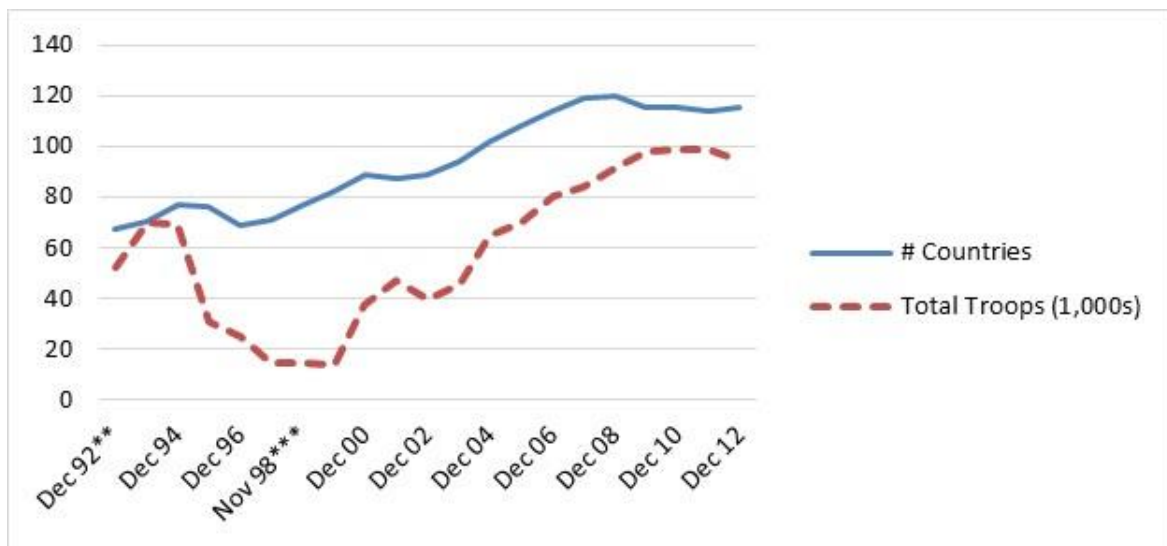
<sup>18</sup> United Nations, *A new partnership agenda charting a new horizon for UN peacekeeping*. (New York, N.Y.: United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, 2009), accessed at <http://web.archive.org/web/20090811063636/http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/newhorizon.pdf>, 18-25.

<sup>19</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Post Cold-War surge," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 22 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/surge.shtml>.

115 in 2012 (Figure 1). As of August 2013, there were over 117,000 individuals deployed on sixteen operations.<sup>20</sup>

Overall demand is increasing, and with it Vietnam has an opportunity to provide much needed forces. However, they are entering the force after over twenty years of peacekeeping evolution. Operations are more complex than they have ever been, especially emerging peacebuilding missions. Although it will be challenging for Vietnam as they begin to build peacekeeping capacity, the evolved skill set required for current peacekeeping and peacebuilding mission offers Vietnam even greater opportunity. Vietnam can create its peacekeeping force in a deliberate manner to meet emerging UN requirements. In helping to meet world demand for these forces, Vietnam can also work toward achieving its own interests.

**Figure 1: Number of peacekeeping forces (in 1,000s) active at the end of the month shown and the number of countries providing those forces.**

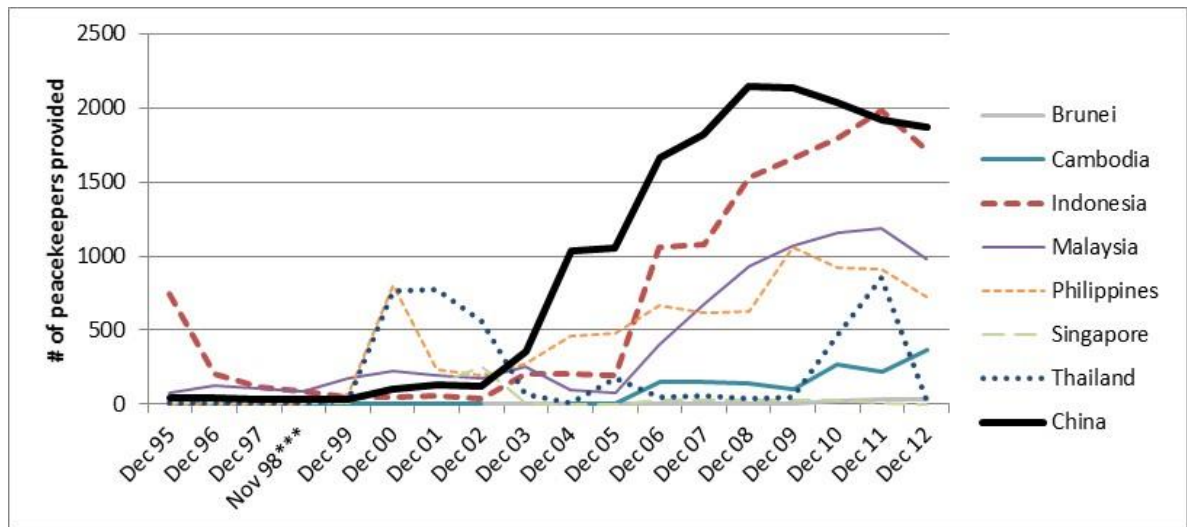


Source: Data compiled from United Nations Peacekeeping, “Troop and police contributors archive (1990-2012),” (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 23 September 2013, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors\\_archive.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml). \*\* 1992 was the first year UN statistics included observers, troops and civil/military police forces. \*\*\*Data not available for December 1998.

<sup>20</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, “Peacekeeping Fact Sheet,” (New York, NY: UN, 2013), last updated 31 August 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml>.

Critics may say that Vietnam should not pursue peacekeeping in spite of the potential benefits. While peacekeeping provides an opportunity for a country to advance its ideals, it is, in fact, power projection. In that context, China and other regional competitors may view Vietnam's peacekeeping effort as antagonistic. Any critic must consider Vietnam is only starting into a business in which the majority of Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members and China already participate (Figure 2). The ten member nations of

**Figure 2: Number of peacekeeping forces provided by ASEAN countries and China.**



Source: Data compiled from United Nations Peacekeeping, "Troop and police contributors archive (1990-2012)," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 23 September 2013, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors\\_archive.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml). \*\*\*Data not available for December 1998.

ASEAN are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. All but Lao (PDR), Myanmar, and Vietnam have, at one point since 1995, offered UN peacekeeping forces. Moreover, since 2003, China's annual contribution has eclipsed all ASEAN nations' support with the exception of Indonesia in 2011. In consideration of these facts, this late entry into peacekeeping by the government of Vietnam cannot be viewed as antagonistic. If

anything were to be considered antagonistic in the Vietnam-China relationship, consider the Vietnamese order of six kilo class submarines with the first two delivered to Vietnam in September 2013.

### **VIETNAM'S INTERESTS**

Just because there is an opportunity for Vietnam to participate in emerging UN peacekeeping operations does not mean it is in Vietnam's best interest to do so. So what does Vietnam have to gain by offering forces for UN operations? This question can be explored by looking at the benefits to Vietnam within the United Nations, among regional partners, and in securing the interests of the Communist Party of Vietnam.<sup>21</sup>

Vietnam endured almost continuous conflict from World War II until 1980. Based on its violent history, it is reasonable to believe Vietnam is sincerely interested in serving the greater good of the international community by providing UN peacekeepers. This view was the focus of Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung when he announced Vietnam's intention to contribute to peacekeeping.<sup>22</sup> The Prime Minister acknowledged Vietnam's growing defense budget, and in doing so, implied that since Vietnam has the ability to contribute it also has the responsibility to provide for the maintenance of international peace.

Although idealistic interests such as world peace undoubtedly exist, there are many practical reasons for Vietnam to contribute to peacekeeping. Active participation in the international community is important for Vietnam to continue to receive assistance from the

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<sup>21</sup> Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams, and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2004). This book offers a construct for considering why organizations conduct peacekeeping. The construct looks at peacekeeping from the UN, regional organization, and nation-state perspectives. Much of this section of the paper is conceptually based on the construct of the book, and this paper infers Vietnam's interests as an extension of the organizational interests presented by Bellamy, Williams and Griffin.

<sup>22</sup> Nguyen Tan Dung, "Building Strategic Trust for Peace, Cooperation and Prosperity in the Asia-Pacific Region," keynote address at the 12th Shangri-La Dialogue, 31 May 2013, reported in *Thanh Nien News*, 1 June 2013, accessed at <http://www.thanhniennews.com/index/pages/20130601-vietnam-pm-keynote-address-at-12th-shangri-la-dialogue.aspx>.

UN Development Program (UNDP). As of October, 2013, Vietnam was receiving over \$113 million annually in UN development funding.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, Vietnam's poor human rights record has been a point of contention in the international community. A contribution of peacekeepers, certainly could go a long way to demonstrate Vietnam as a reliable partner with the UN.

The government of Vietnam also has political aspirations within the United Nations. Vietnam served as a non-permanent member of the UNSC from 2008 through 2009. It is bidding for a seat on the 2014-2016 UN Human Rights Council, and have renewed aspirations for another seat on the Security Council.<sup>24</sup>

With its current human rights record, Vietnam's bid to be a representative on the Human Rights Council is likely to be opposed. Human Rights Watch, a well-respected, independent organization, dedicated to the protection of human rights around the world, noted the government of Vietnam routinely limits individual freedoms.<sup>25</sup> The range of abuses includes repression of free speech and assembly, and religious discrimination and persecution. The government has been particularly harsh on internet bloggers with recent dissident bloggers receiving prison sentences up to twelve years in length. The world is taking note and responding. On 1 August 2013, the U.S. House of Representatives passed the Vietnam Human Rights Act of 2013. This act restricts nonhumanitarian assistance to

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<sup>23</sup> United Nations Development Group, "Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office Gateway," Funding for Vietnam Projects, updated 27 October 2013, <http://mptf.undp.org/factsheet/country/VNM>. This website provides near-realtime information regarding allocation of UNDP funding.

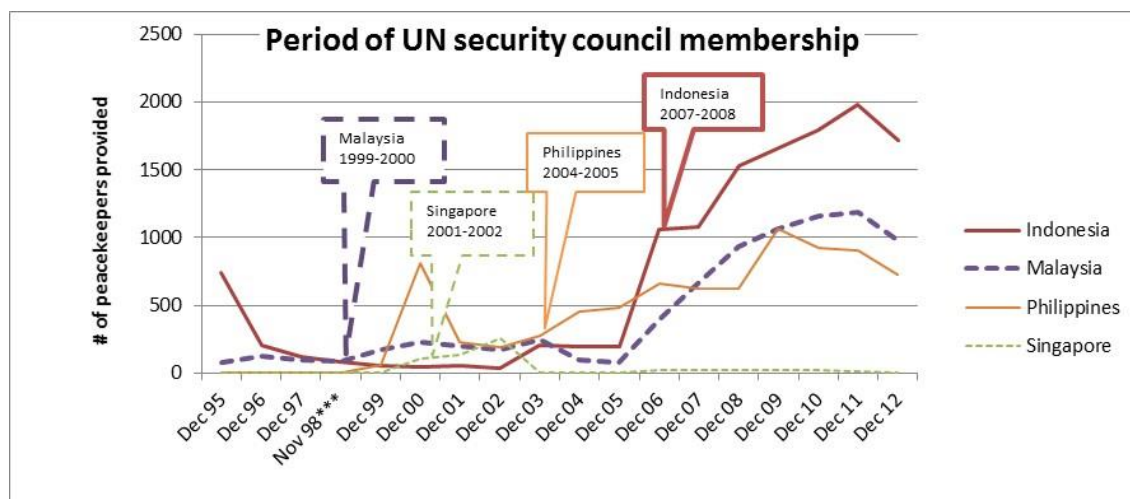
<sup>24</sup> Supalak Ganjanakhundee, "ASEAN to back member candidates as UN representatives," *The Nation*, 28 September 2013, accessed at <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/politics/Asean-to-back-member-candidates-as-UN-representati-30215825.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch (Organization), *World report 2013: events of 2012*, (New York, NY: Seven Stories Press, 2013), 382-384.

Vietnam unless their government makes substantial reforms in the area of human rights.<sup>26</sup> A successful venture into peacebuilding will help Vietnam both understand the greater world view of human rights, while also helping the government show the world it is able to respect those rights. This may translate into more active support for Vietnam's Human Rights Council bid.

Vietnam not only wants a seat on the Human Rights Council, but as previously stated, they also aspire to another seat on the UNSC. Since 1994, five Association of Southeast Asian Countries (ASEAN) members have been voted to the UN Security Council. Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam have all served on the UNSC since 1994. In four of the five cases, their term was preceded by an increase in the number of personnel they provided for peacekeeping operations (Figure 3). Furthermore, they generally increased their contribution during and following their terms on the Security Council. There was one notable exception. When Vietnam was voted on to the UNSC it had not participated in

**Figure 3: ASEAN nations elected to serve as non-permanent members of the UN Security Council and the number of peacekeeping forces provided relative to the start of their term.**



Source: Data compiled from United Nations Peacekeeping, "Troop and police contributors archive (1990-2012)," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 23 September 2013, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors\\_archive.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors_archive.shtml). \*\*\*Data not available for December 1998

peacekeeping operations. If Vietnam wishes to advance its agenda within the UN, its participation in peacekeeping operations can build political capital to support its efforts.

In addition to involvement in the United Nations, Vietnam is also an energetic participant in ASEAN and has encouraged ASEAN to take an active role in peacekeeping. Vietnam's H.E. Le Luong Minh is the current Secretary General of ASEAN, and he is using his position to reinforce the importance of ASEAN participation in regional peacekeeping.<sup>27</sup> By being active in peacekeeping operations, ASEAN has the ability to establish rules of behavior during peacekeeping, provide accountability, lend legitimacy to peacekeeping operations, and to provide an institutional memory to improve future operations.<sup>28</sup> To date, ASEAN has embraced this role.

The Association of South East Asian Nations is actively establishing a peacekeeping capacity. The group has developed a roadmap called the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint. One of the essential roadmap goals is to establish "an arrangement for the maintenance of peace and stability."<sup>29</sup> A central feature of the ASEAN arrangement is the creation of a network of ASEAN-nation peacekeeping centers. Currently, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Thailand have peacekeeping centers.<sup>30</sup> The ASEAN network of peacekeeping centers should provide an enhanced forum for sharing experiences while conducting joint planning and training. Ultimately, the interconnected centers should improve regional peace through collaboration and the establishment of mutual

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<sup>27</sup> H.E. Le Luong Minh, "Opening remarks by H.E. Le Luong Minh Secretary General of ASEAN at the ASEAN-UN Workshop Lessons Learned and Best Practices in Conflict Prevention and Preventive Diplomacy," 5 April 2013, (Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN Secretariat, 2013), accessed at <http://www.asean.org/news/item/opening-remarks-by-he-le-luong-minh-secretary-general-of-asean-at-the-asean-un-workshop-lessons-learned-and-best-practices-in-conflict-prevention-and-preventive-diplomacy>.

<sup>28</sup> Bellamy, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 41.

<sup>29</sup> Association of Southeast Asian Nations, "ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting - Concept Paper on the Establishment of ASEAN Peacekeeping Centres Network," (Jakarta, Indonesia: ASEAN Secretariat, 2013), accessed 23 September 2013, <http://www.asean.org/archive/documents/18471-j.pdf>, 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.



respect. This network provides an excellent opportunity for Vietnam to learn from others' mistakes and aggressively progress in developing peacekeeping capability.

In addition to near-term plans for a network of centers, ASEAN has more advanced medium and long-term plans. In the mid-term, ASEAN will establish standard operating procedures for their peacekeeping network, and they will oversee joint training. Through the merging of Asian thoughts on peacekeeping, ASEAN will have the ability to influence UN peacekeeping in consideration of Asian culture. In the long-term, the ASEAN Defense Ministers agreed to forge a common standby response force.<sup>31</sup>

As this regional institution grows its peacekeeping personality, Vietnam is in a position to affect future operations. Taking a leadership role in ASEAN's growing peacekeeping community will allow Vietnam to gain credibility in the region and, thereby, have greater opportunity to establish bilateral and multilateral agreements. One such arrangement is their strategic partnership with Thailand that strengthens the connection between the Communist Party of Vietnam and Thailand's political parties.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, greater regional influence will empower Vietnam with a larger voice in discussing regional issues such as free trade and social development.<sup>33</sup>

Although capable of pursuing some of its goals indirectly through the UN and ASEAN, the government of Vietnam can also directly address some of its interests through peacekeeping efforts. Peacekeeping involvement allows a state to press claims to territory, secure economic and natural resource interests, promote allied socio-economic and political

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>32</sup> *Thang Long – Hanoi*, "Vietnam, Thailand Promote Strategic Cooperation," 28 June 2013, accessed at <http://en.hanoi.vietnamplus.vn/Home/Vietnam-Thailand-promote-strategic-cooperation/20136/2755.vnplus>.

<sup>33</sup> In addition to the ASEAN Political-Security Community Blueprint, ASEAN has two other communities focused on these issues; the ASEAN Economic Community and the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community respectively.

interests, and maintain the status quo and regional order.<sup>34</sup> For Vietnam, the most valuable of these is to maintain the status quo and regional order; specifically as it pertains to conflicting claims in the South China Sea.

The relationship between South China Sea claims and peacekeeping is certainly not obvious. However, there are a couple of ways Vietnam's development of peacekeeping capacity helps maintain the South China Sea status quo. First, peacekeeping serves as a forcing function for regional interoperability. As previously discussed, regional cooperation in peacekeeping will increase mutual understanding between the Vietnamese military and the militaries of other Asian countries. Cooperation between Vietnam and other nations with South China Sea claims, such as the Philippines and Malaysia which are active peacekeeping states, will produce a collective capability China must consider if it takes aggressive action to secure its claims. Second, preparing for peacekeeping operations can give Vietnam access to training and skill sets that directly translate to maritime operations. For example, the UN Office of Military Affairs maintains a Military Planning Service with planning teams with specialized aviation and maritime operational planners.<sup>35</sup> Advanced planning for naval operations, especially in relatively low intensity patrolling operations, can be a very beneficial skill for a nation wanting to increase its naval presence around a collection of low-population islands. Finally, peacekeeping operations provide Vietnam with an avenue for developing better processes and infrastructure for the sharing of security related information.

In addition to reinforcing territorial claims, the Communist Party of Vietnam (CPV) can use UN peacebuilding to develop capabilities that are useful in handling internal matters. The government of Vietnam, controlled by the CPV, has growing concerns about crime and

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<sup>34</sup> Bellamy, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 11.

<sup>35</sup> United Nations Peacekeeping, "Office of Military Affairs," (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed 23 October 2013, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/about/dpko/oma.shtml>.

drugs.<sup>36</sup> Some capabilities, especially the type of civil policing capabilities demanded by the UN's New Horizon Initiative, are well suited to help the CPV deal with crime. By maximizing the training of these forces, Vietnam gains the prestige of assisting UN operations; but the CPV also strengthens its internal situation by providing for one of its citizens' basic security needs.

## CONCLUSION

Since the emergence of peacekeeping operations in 1948, peacekeeping has evolved significantly. Over the last decade, peacekeeping operations have increased in size and complexity. Vietnam is in a good position to take advantage of this growing international phenomena. As Vietnam continues to emerge on the world stage, its stated moral obligation to contribute to international peace aligns well with its practical interests. At the UN level, peacekeeping involvement will put Vietnam in a better position to advance its ideas in the international community while also solidifying its access to resources provided through the UN. It will also provide Vietnam with an avenue for improving their human rights record. On a regional level, there exists the possibility to first leverage existing experience, then take a leadership role as ASEAN grows into peacekeeping. International relations cultivated through common peacekeeping interests will allow Vietnam to influence a wider range of regional interests such as economic growth. These same international relationships can assist in creating a conceptual hedge versus Chinese claims to South China Sea territory. This hedge occurs in a manner that is subtle and, therefore, should not be detrimental to diplomatic efforts between Vietnam and China. Finally, training for peacekeeping will provide Vietnam with improved policing, military planning, and perhaps most importantly,

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<sup>36</sup> Jane's Information Group, *Jane's Sentinel Country Risk Assessments, Southeast Asia 2013*, (Englewood, CO: IHS Global Limited, 2013), 792.

interoperability with regional partners. To maximize its ability to advance its international and regional interests, Vietnam should move forward in a deliberate manner.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

To achieve its goal of increased regional and international influence, the government of Vietnam should take several careful actions. The first thing Vietnam must do is establish a measured approach to peacekeeping. They have done this somewhat already by surveying peacekeeping operations in South Sudan and by co-hosting a seminar for new peacekeeper nations.<sup>37</sup> They have also stated their intention to begin by providing medical and engineering personnel first, but that may not be the best way forward. Instead, they may want to start with staff officers, to gain an understanding of the process of planning for peace operations. They should also create a formal peacekeeping observer force. As they provide forces, early consideration for a peacebuilding related civil policing capability would fill a particular UN need while also providing the CPV with improved capacity for local law enforcement. Vietnam should review the UN's list of critical shortages, which includes mobility; enablers such as engineers and logisticians; information-gathering; formed and specialized police units; strategic planners; and female military, police and senior civilian personnel, to determine other areas where they can fill need both at home and in peacekeeping.<sup>38</sup> Only after their planning and support capacity improves, should they consider offering infantry forces for peace enforcement.

In addition to their order of peacekeeping development, the government of Vietnam should consider how it trains their peacekeepers. Training and education programs must

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<sup>37</sup> *News Vietnam Net*, "Viet Nam's Peacekeepers 'at the ready'".

<sup>38</sup> UN, *A new partnership agenda*, 27.

ensure Vietnam's peacekeepers meet and maintain UN standards.<sup>39</sup> On 29 October, 2012, the UN Under-Secretary-General Herve Ladsous commented on UN progress toward developing standards. He proposed establishing an "Inspector-General type function to support the Secretariat and Member States through assessment of and reporting on the efficiency, effectiveness and utilization of a field mission's military components and formed police units."<sup>40</sup> It is safe to assume if Vietnam peacekeepers do not perform up to the standards set by the UN, Vietnam's opportunity to contribute will be limited and their international prestige will decline.

Even more important than the practical training forces receive is the discipline the government must instill in their forces. Peacekeeping is an act played on the world stage. To maintain the credibility of the Vietnam government, troops must be taught the discipline essential to avoiding circumstances through which the international audience may come to question Vietnam's record on human rights issues. It takes a long time to build influence through peacekeeping operations, but only minutes to lose it if state representatives do not act appropriately. The United States experience with Abu-Ghraib serves as a blatant reminder.

Once their peacekeepers are trained, Vietnam should consider maintaining a core of peacekeeping professionals who maintain a career path within peacekeeping. This will have great returns to Vietnam in a train-the-trainer construct as their professional understanding grows. The development of a pool of experienced professionals will also help the UN in dealing with the problems of a large turnover and a lack of institutional knowledge.

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<sup>39</sup> Herve Ladsous, "Statement to the Fourth Committee," 29 October 2012, (New York, NY: UN, 2013), accessed at [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/articles/4thc\\_dpkousg\\_01112012.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/articles/4thc_dpkousg_01112012.pdf), 5. Summary in UN document number A/C.4/67/SR.14.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

To assist with training and development, Vietnam should establish a peacekeeping center as soon as possible. It will not be easy. A representative of the Vietnamese Institute for Defense International Relations admitted Vietnam will need help to build their peacekeeping center.<sup>41</sup> Vietnam should petition the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) for funds to help develop their center's infrastructure. The GPOI is a U.S. government funded security assistance program designed to increase partner nations' ability to conduct peace operations. Currently in phase II, the program emphasis is on building sustainable training capacity. This matches remarkably well with where Vietnam is with their program.<sup>42</sup> The GPOI should be able to help with some of the challenges associated with building a peacekeeping facility, and also the manning structure to get the most out of the accompanying organization. The Government of Vietnam also should link in with the ASEAN peacekeeping network. By building a peacekeeping center immediately, rather than waiting until they have deployed forces, Vietnam will be better positioned to obtain needed training and leverage the experiences of other ASEAN peacekeeping contributors.

As the Vietnamese build their Peacekeeping Center, they should continue to exploit all available training resources. Australia is already providing military and English language training for eighty Vietnamese troops.<sup>43</sup> There are several other avenues available for individuals to obtain related education and training. For example, the Peace Operations and Training Institute provides online training and certification, currently used by the Australian

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<sup>41</sup> *News Vietnam Net*, "Viet Nam's Peacekeepers 'at the ready'".

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Global Peace Operations Initiative" accessed 24 October 2013, <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/ppa/gpoi/index.htm>.

<sup>43</sup> *The Australian*, "Aust to help Vietnam prepare UN mission," 19 March 2013, accessed at <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/aust-to-help-vietnam-prepare-un-mission/story-fn3dxiwe-1226600794220>.

government. Vietnam should offer its forces similar access to online and classroom instruction.

Twenty-five years after their withdrawal from Cambodia, the government of Vietnam has taken a bold step to transition from being part of the problem to being part of the solution. In a joint statement with Vietnam's President Truong Tan Sang, President Barack Obama “welcomed Vietnam's decision to participate in United Nations peacekeeping operations and emphasized the United States' desire to assist with training and other support for this effort through the Global Peace Operations Initiative.”<sup>44</sup> With the support of the U.S. and other peacekeeping partners, there is little reason to doubt Vietnam's ability to take advantage of this opportunity. Furthermore, it is clear they should pursue even greater involvement in peacekeeping in an attempt to advance their international and regional interests.

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<sup>44</sup> The White House, “Joint Statement by President Barack Obama of the United States of America and President Truong Tan Sang of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam,” 25 July 2013, accessed at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/07/25/joint-statement-president-barack-obama-united-states-america-and-preside>.

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